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SUBJECT: UKRAINIAN CRISIS: "NO SHARP MOVEMENT" FROM MOSCOW

REF: MOSCOW 1478

Classified By: Ambassador William J. Burns. Reasons 1.4 (B/D).

Summary

[11.](#) (C) The GOR continues to keep a cautious but close watch over the unfolding crisis in Ukraine. In private, Russian leaders urge that the US and Russia advocate quietly for a constitutional resolution. DFM Karasin told the Ambassador and DAS Kramer to expect "no sharp movement" from the Russian side. Observers attribute the more hands-off Russian approach to lessons learned from the GOR's failed intervention in 2004. End Summary.

Quiet Diplomacy

[12.](#) (C) The GOR has been largely silent in public on the Ukrainian crisis. Deputy Foreign Minister Grigoriy Karasin told Ambassador and visiting DAS Kramer April 6 that the Ukraine stand-off is the internal political problem of a neighboring country. As such, Russia cannot be indifferent, but "there will be no sharp movement from out side." Ukrainian politicians must work through this crisis themselves, without outside interference, he said. Russia hopes all Ukrainian decisions will be transparent and constitutionally legitimate. "Those are the principles -- everything else is tactics."

[13.](#) (C) The State Duma issued a statement April 6 criticizing Yushchenko's decision to dissolve the Rada and calling on the OSCE and the European Parliament to express solidarity with Ukrainian parliamentarians. Duma CIS Committee Chairman Kokoshin told DAS Kramer April 6 that the US and Russia should work quietly to calm the situation. Former Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Yevgeniy Primakov commented to the Ambassador April 6 that it would make no sense for Russia to play an overt mediating role. He shared Kokoshin's view that it was essential for the US and Russia to advocate quietly for a peaceful resolution.

[14.](#) (C) Viktor Sorokin, Director of the MFA's Second CIS Department (Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova) told us April 6 that he had nothing to add on GOR reaction, saying "we must wait and see." Sorokin refused comment on press accounts that Yanukovich might request unspecified mediation from Russia or Poland.

Lessons of 2004

[15.](#) (C) Ukraine watchers we spoke with agreed that the GOR is treading carefully this time around. Konstantin Eggert, BBC

Moscow bureau chief, expressed to us the widely-held view that the Russian government is less overtly involved in the current crisis because of 2004. Aleksey Bogaturov, Dean of the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), agreed, noting that the GOR cannot do much in public "because of the 2004 experience." Andrey Ryabov, a scholar at the Moscow Carnegie Center, commented to us that fear of the possible consequences of Russian meddling keeps the GOR in the background -- at least for the time being.

Russia 1993?

¶6. (C) Though DFM Karasin seemed to endorse the press commentary that the Ukrainian situation resembled that of the 1993 crisis in Moscow, Ryabov dismissed the comparison, arguing that such characterizations were for Russian audiences only. Ryabov thought that Yushchenko had opted to "go for broke" in a bid to regain the initiative, while Yuliya Tymoshenko saw no alternative but her trademark populism. Ryabov expressed concern that Ukraine cannot afford another election and the additional social commitments that would follow. He cautioned that Ukrainians are fatigued after two years of political unrest; observers should not overestimate Ukrainians' desire to mobilize politically.

¶7. (C) Fedor Lukyanov, editor of the journal "Russia in Global Affairs," who wrote the original article comparing the two crises, told DAS Kramer that the constitutional issues are what make them similar; the players are very different. He believed Yushchenko was forced to move by the defection of Rada deputies and the conviction that failure to act would result in his marginalization.

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Orange Split: Root of Crisis

¶8. (C) Ukraine watchers downplayed the significance of any foreign influence - Russian or American - in the crisis. Bogaturov said that the real problem was "Yuliya, who wants everything -- now." Bogaturov argued the crisis stemmed less from the struggle between the ruling coalition and the opposition, and more from the struggle within the Orange camp. The BBC's Eggert claimed that Tymoshenko's all-or-nothing tendency had caused Yushchenko to become "uncharacteristically" decisive; unfortunately, his decisiveness might have been ill-timed and poorly conceived. Ryabov lamented that the "Soviet, winner-take-all" tendencies he attributed to Yushchenko and Tymoshenko had served to unravel a "fragile but workable" political compromise.

Instability and the Business Climate

¶9. (C) Ukraine watchers were also uniform in the belief that there was no advantage to Russia in an unstable Ukraine. Duma Chairman Kokoshin commented that Russia had been content with the status quo ante and had no interest in uncertainty. Ryabov expressed concern about the impact of the crisis on Russian companies, which have invested heavily in Ukraine. The protection of these commercial interests would play a central role in driving Kremlin policy, he said. Kokoshin agreed. He affirmed to DAS Kramer that Russian economic and commercial interests in Ukraine were strong influences on GOR policy.

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